



DANCE REVIEW

Grupo Corpo dazzles with strength and vulnerability



JOSE LUIZ PEDERNEIRAS/FILE

“Dança Sinfônica” was one of two new works Grupo Corpo brought to the Shubert Theatre.

By Karen Campbell

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It’s a delectable blend of polished technical precision and juicy, loose-limbed muscularity. And oh those hips! The fabulous dancers of Grupo Corpo offered two works in their Celebrity Series engagement Friday night that really drilled home the Brazilian company’s appealing aesthetic and dazzling energy.

Though both works were too long and tended to unspool flurries of movements as opposed to cohesively develop and arc, they were marvels of the moment. Beautifully

aligned arabesques and jetés segued into floor rolls and tumbles. Brilliant, fleet footwork that sent the dancers skittering with quick changes of weight and direction coalesced into eye-catching patterns of shifting lines and unison groupings. Supple torsos arched and undulated. Swiveling shoulders and hips evoked traditional Brazilian dance forms and seemed to grant limbs the freedom to rotate out of their sockets, punctuated by sharp inflections and isolations. Blistering turns that sailed across the stage could just as easily stop on a dime.

For the first half of Cassi Abranches's "Suíte Branca," the bright white backdrop and floor provided a blank canvas for what felt like a busy blur of 19 gorgeous bodies. But then a charming little duet gave us a human connection. The two dancers didn't just couple physically — they seemed to enjoy their playful partnership, spinning together through quicksilver turns and lifts that coiled up and over. After that, it was easier to note a theme of vulnerability and resilience — leans that tipped almost off balance, falls and recoveries time and again, and these breathtakingly trusting backwards swoons into awaiting arms.

Company choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras created "Dança Sinfônica" in 2015 to commemorate the troupe's 40th anniversary. Mining and synthesizing choreography from Grupo Corpo's repertoire, the work progresses as a mostly seamless mélange set to a wide-ranging original symphonic score by Marco Antônio Guimarães. The music recalls everything from rumbling folkloric percussion to a romantic waltz to Bach's first cello suite. Similarly, the dance showcases the company's stylistic range, riding each other like horses or kicking into a mixed-meter stomp dance one moment, soaring into lyrical, rhapsodic phrases the next.

The work's takeaway — besides the sheer stamina of the dancers — is Pederneiras's eye-popping partnering. Stark shapes abounded — women carried upright like totems or hoisted horizontally aloft, breaking into curving sculptural forms. Just as easily they dip and soar like fish or fly through the air with astonishing breath and sweep, never as simple manipulated bodies but as equal partners. The image that stays with you is a poignant moment of stillness — a woman in gold curled into a fetal position gently cradled in the arms of her male partner.

GRUPO CORPO

Celebrity Series at Boch Center Shubert Theatre

Through Sunday

Tickets \$60 – \$75, 617-482-6661, www.celebrityseries.org

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